

PROGRESS REPORT MEMO

To: ABAG Bay Area Dioxins Project Task Force
From: Katie Silberman and Mike Green, Public Participation Coordinators
Date: July 23, 2001
Re: Report on Public Participation Process

Dear Task Force:

We would like to update you on the progress of the Bay Area Dioxins Project Public Participation Process. The Project held a public meeting on April 26, 2001, with written comments submitted until May 10. Our goals for the process were to ensure that all concerned constituencies were reached out to and listened to, and their comments seriously evaluated for inclusion into the draft document or decision-making process. Our strategy for accomplishing this included massive outreach through phone calls, mailed brochures, mailed postcards, and personal meetings with interested parties.

The public participation strategy that CEH implemented under the task force's direction has been very successful to date. Some indicators of this success include:

- Attendance at initial meetings for the public participation process
- Strong attendance at the public hearing
- Numerous spoken and written comments received
- Feedback from community groups, industry groups, environmental groups and Task Force members that they felt the process was fair and went well

I. The Process

CEH began our outreach efforts with the list of about 250 people and organizations who signed up to be notified about dioxin at a series of meetings held by the City of Oakland. To supplement that list, we asked labor, environmental, community and industry representatives, and Task Force members, to recommend additions. This resulted in about 600 more names being added.

In January, we convened a series of three small meetings with Task Force members and representatives of labor, industry and environmental and community groups. The Task Force chose to hold three separate meetings so that each constituency would feel heard, and not intimidated or silenced by opposing views. Approximately 20 members of the public attended those three meetings in total, plus several Task Force members at each meeting. The meeting with the lowest turnout was the labor meeting, even though we did extensive outreach to all labor groups on the list including faxing and individual phone calls. Labor also did not attend the public meeting, despite similar outreach efforts.

About six weeks before the scheduled April 26, 2001 public meeting, we sent a brochure describing the Project and giving the date of the public meeting to the 850 people on the mailing list. We followed up with phone calls to many groups asking if they wanted to meet with us, describing the process and encouraging them to attend the public meeting.

Staff members of the Center for Environmental Health, the ABAG Dioxins Project Task Force, and TDC Environmental had individual discussions with all who request such meetings. Meetings were held with:

- Craig Johns (Partnership for Sound Science in Environmental Policy), Fred Krause (Vinyl Institute), John Marshall (Chlorine Chemistry Council) and Jay Murray (Murray and Associates)
- Eric Zell of Zell and Associates (a Contra Costa business group), with Jim Jakel (former Martinez City Manager), Dino Hair (Chevron, Contra Costa City Council, Manufacturing Task Force), Peter McGraw (attorney, Archer-Morris, chair of Contra Costa Environmental Task Force)

- California Zero Dioxin Alliance (a community and environmental group), including Bradley Angel and Sue Chiang (Greenaction), Karleen Lloyd (People United for a Better Oakland), Catherine Porter (Women's Cancer Resource Center), Greg Karras (Communities for a Better Environment), and Davis Baltz (Commonweal)
- Herbert Estreicher, (Pentachlorophenol Trade Association)
- Dennis Bolt, (Western States Petroleum Association- WSPA), Kevin Buchanon (WSPA), Brent Finley (Exponent), Fred Krause (Vinyl Institute), John Marshall (Chlorine Chemistry Council), Jay Murray (Murray and Associates)
- Our many phone conversations included such groups as La Leche League, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, and SEIU Local 250.

One week before the April 26th meeting, we sent a reminder postcard to the entire list, and followed up with dozens of phone calls. We contacted community-based organizations, labor and industry groups, environmental groups, and several elected officials, including State Assembly Members, Board and staff of the Air District, and Oakland, San Francisco and Alameda City Council Members.

II. The Public Meeting and Written Comments Submitted

On April 26, 2001, more than 30 members of the public and 12 Task Force members attended the public meeting. Eighteen members of the public spoke. Indicators of a successful meeting were:

- the meeting was well attended by the Task Force and the public
- everyone who wanted to speak had a chance (some twice)
- attendees respected each speaker and did not interrupt each other
- the Task Force heard diverse and valuable opinions on the Project
- the room set-up was conducive to a productive meeting and there were no technical glitches
- many constituencies were represented in the people who spoke.

Comments on the Public Participation Process.

Members of the public who submitted comments on the public participation process were mainly concerned with the closed-door nature of Task Force decisionmaking. Since then, the Task Force has decided to open meetings to the public, with a public comment period before and after the meeting. The web site has also been updated to include more substantial information for public review. Both of these developments should allay some of the public's concerns about the transparency of the decisionmaking process.

Comments on Project Selection by Local Governments.

Many commenters praised the Task Force for taking steps to reduce dioxins in the Bay Area. The most frequently submitted comments concern, in order: (1) encouragement to move quickly to finalize the TDC draft report and choose a pilot project; (2) encouragement to act on dioxin reduction, not conduct more studies; (3) the national significance of the project and (4) emphasizing that the goal of the project is dioxin prevention and elimination, not reduction. Many speakers suggested pilot projects, with heavy emphasis on educating hospitals about medical waste management and PVC reduction.

A compilation of public comments related to the Project process itself is attached as a chart.

III. Next Steps

We feel that the project is moving along well, and is generally well received by the public. To keep up the momentum, CEH recommends:

- Task Force: continue to have open meetings
- Task Force: expedite draft finalization, project selection, and implementation of pilot project(s) to the best extent possible
- Executive Board: distribute final document widely to constituencies and encourage local municipality to act on dioxins.